

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-20 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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TAGS: CI ECON ETRN EAGR

SUBJ: PRELIMINARY ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT OF STORM DAMAGE

REF: SANTIAGO 3837

1. SUMMARY: THE SERIES OF STORMS WHICH SO FAR HAVE DUMPED TWICE THE NORMAL AMOUNT OF RAIN HAVE CAUSED DAMAGES TO HOMES, TRANSPORTATION AND CROPS: WILL HINDER GOC IN ITS ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS. END SUMMARY.

2. AGATT INFORMS THAT MOST WINTER WHEAT PLANTED IN LOW LYING AREAS LOST AND MUST BE REPLANTED. THE WINTER WHEAT CROP MAY SUFFER LOSS AS MUCH AS 10 PERCENT OR ABOUT 100,000 METRIC TONS, BUT LOSSES MAY BE RECOUPED BY SPRING PLANTING. LOSS OF TRUCK FARM CROPS SANTIAGO AREA ESTIMATED AT 30 PERCENT. ORCHARDS SUFFERED MINOR DAMAGE; VINYARDS ARE PROBABLY NOT SERIOUSLY AFFECTED. SINCE MOST OF SUGAR BEET CROP HARVESTED BUT LEFT STANDING IN PILES, CONTINUED WET WEATHER AND TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS COULD RESULT IN LOSS OF ABOUT 10 PERCENT OF CROP. MOST SERIOUS LOSS IS FERTILIZER APPLIED TO FIELDS PRIOR TO RAINS. REPLACEMENT DIFFICULTY AND EXPENSIVE DUE TO SCARCITY. RAIN HAS HAD BENEFICIAL EFFECTS IN NORTHERN AREAS OF COUNTRY WHERE INCREASED PRODUCTION OF CROPS SUCH

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AS WHEAT AND POTATOES EXPECTED, AND DRINKING WATER SUPPLY

FOR LIVESTOCK NOW MORE PLENTIFUL.

3. WATER DAMAGE TO FOUNDATIONS AND WALLS HAS LED TO COLLAPSE OF SEVERAL BUILDINGS. MANY HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES HAVE BEEN WASHED OUT AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN SOME SOUTHERN AREAS REPORTEDLY NOT FUNCTIONING. DAMAGE COSTS NOT YET FULLY KNOWN, BUT AN INDICATION OF THE MAGNITUDE IS EVIDENCED BY EMERGENCY OFFICE STATEMENT THAT 17,000 PERSONS HAVE BEEN EVACUATED.

4. COMMENT: DESPITE BENEFITS TO NORTHERN AREAS AND TWO-YEAR WATER SUPPLY STORED IN MOUNTAIN SNOWS, STORM DAMAGES ARE A SERIOUS BLOW TO CHILE'S ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS. ALREADY CRITICAL HOUSING SITUATION NOW ACCENTUATED BY LOSS OR DAMAGE TO MANY HOMES. DAMAGE TO HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES WILL NECESSITATE EITHER INCREASED EXPENDITURE OR DIVERSION RESOURCES FROM OTHER PROJECTS. DAMAGE TO CROPS AND LOSS OF FERTILIZER WILL RESULT IN LOWER YIELD AND CONSEQUENT GREATER NEED FOR FOOD IMPORTS, ADVERSELY AFFECTING BALANCE OF PAYMENTS.
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